

C A S E Evaluation of the YMCA Youth Worker Intern Programme

EVALUATION OF THE YMCA YOUTH WORKER INTERN PROGRAMME

**RESEARCHED FOR
THE YMCA**

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INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on the evaluation of the Youth Worker Intern Programme that was conducted in 2002. The programme consisted of three residential blocks, spread over April, June and September. A total of 21 interns attended the training. Six trainers who were selected on the basis of their expertise conducted the training.

The selection of course participants went through a rigorous process. Local YMCA's has to recommend prospective interns who were either members of the YMCA or who were involved in a local YMCA. Prospective interns were asked to complete a short paper motivating their selection. Once selected interns had to commit themselves to the programme which ran between April and September.

Interns were expected to attend each residential session. Between the residential blocks interns were expected to complete a number of assignments. The areas covered in the programme included areas such as gender sensitivity, youth work skills, counselling, facilitation, problem solving, communication as well as needs analysis.

Methodology

A series of in-depth telephonic interviews were conducted with all the stakeholders. A total of 15 interns who attended the course this year were interviewed and two interns each from 1999 onwards were interviewed. In addition to the trainers and programme co-ordinators a total of six intern supervisors were interviewed. The interviews took place approximately four weeks after the end of the last residential session.

About youth interns

All the youth interviewed including interns that completed the course this year (referred to as current interns) as well as those that completed the course over the last three years (referred to as past interns) completed their matric. The majority of them were involved with their local YMCA's and either worked as volunteers or had some kind of paid position within their local YMCA. There were some past interns who worked at a NGO's and community projects.

All current interns said they were involved in some sort of community related work. This included working on the Better Life Options (BLO) programmes, in some instances co-ordinating the drop-in centre, providing information on HIV/AIDS, being involved in adopt a learner projects, recruiting members for the YMCA, adult literacy programmes as well as counselling in areas like career guidance.

The past interns that were interviewed felt that their current jobs or involvement in various projects was a direct result of them attending the Youth Worker Intern

Programme. They also claimed that in addition to providing them with valuable work orientated skills, the Youth Worker Intern Programme also helped them develop on a personal level.

About the programme

Information about the course was communicated to interns in a number of ways. This included receiving information from national, regional and local offices of the YMCA, through friends, from people that attended the course previously, from colleagues and also from the YMCA newsletter.

Objectives of the programme

The broad objectives of the programme were to develop youth leaders in community work and skills, raise the standard of youth work in South Africa and increase the human resource capacity within local YMCA's.

Current interns saw the objectives of the programmes as being two fold. On the one level they saw the programme as equipping them with the skills and knowledge to work in their organisations and communities. They felt the objective of the programme was to impart knowledge not only about the YMCA in particular but also about how to work in communities more effectively. The programme provided youth with skills to reach out to young people in communities focusing on various relevant issues such as HIV/AIDS. Other comments about the objectives of the course included the creation of professionalism in youth work with one programme intern saying the objective of the programme was to:

“...have a more professional youth worker”.

On the other level developing the individual was also viewed as an important objective of the programme. Many interns felt the programme built their self-esteem and developed them at a personal level. Some of the interns said attending the programme had a positive impact on their lives not only in terms of work and their involvement with the YMCA but also in relation to their personal lives.

Past interns as well as supervisors and trainers felt that the key objective of the Youth Worker Intern Programme was to empower young people to have the skills to work in their communities and to equip them with skills to develop them as individuals. Like current interns they also felt the programme was designed to develop them on two levels, the personal and on a work related level.

How successfully were the objectives of the programme met?

When we asked current interviewees how successfully they thought the objectives of the programme were met the responses we got although varied, were generally

affirmative. Some felt that they were able to go back to their communities and apply what they had learnt on the programme. This for them was an indication that the objectives of the programme were met. There was also feeling that since attending the programme they gained confidence. One of the areas in which a number of current interns claimed to have gained confidence in was in the area of community work. Since familiarising interns with community work was an objective of the programme, interns claiming that they were able to do this, indicates that this objective of the programme was successfully met.

Current interns were generally optimistic that the objectives of the programme were in the process of being met and will be met at some point. Reasons given for certain objectives not being met included problems within communities and in some instances the relative newness of a project.

There was however a feeling among current interns that problems within the community could have a negative impact on the objectives of the programme being met. Most of these problems related to the reluctance of community members to get involved as well as the reluctance of community leaders to relinquish control and to allow projects to start off and gain momentum. In addition one of the current interns felt that being a woman created further problems in trying to get a project off the ground. She had the following to say:

“Gender also plays a role. As a woman sometimes people ignore you when you want to start a project.” (Course intern)

Although gender issues were tackled in the programme and interns may have become sensitised to the issues, the comment above indicates that the problem of gender discrimination still exists within the wider community.

Most of the past interns felt the objectives of the programme were successfully met. They claimed that they continued to use the skills and that most of them are currently involved in projects that deal with youth related issues. However one of the concerns raised by the past interns was that although they acquired a range of very valuable skills on the programme a number of interns that completed the course since 1999 were still not employed. There seemed to be an expectation that the YMCA should provide some form of employment for interns. It was felt that this would provide interns with valuable experience that will bode well when they look for employment.

The opinions of trainers varied in relation to how successfully the objectives of the training were met. Some trainers felt that the objectives of the training programme were met and that this could be seen in the increased involvement of youth in community work. They felt that the standard of youth work in the country has increased and there is an increased level of skills within the YMCA. Other trainers were more sceptical,

saying that some of the objectives of the training programme were met while others were still in the process of being met. One of the trainers felt that the YMCA's objective of training a pool of youth was not met since only youth linked to the YMCA were included in the training.

When we asked supervisors whether they thought the programme had successfully met its objectives a number of supervisors felt that this was dependent on the YMCA at which the intern was based. There was a strong feeling that at the national level these objectives were met. However the success of the interns at local level depends on how successfully the local organisations manages to include the intern in its programmes. If one of the objectives was to get youth involved in local YMCA organisations then the main problem in trying to achieve this was the lack of resources at local level. In addition the lack of communication between the people who make decisions at the local level and the Youth Worker Intern Programme co-ordinators were also seen as issues that prevented the objectives of the programme to be met.

Strengths of the programme

Development of youth

All interns, supervisors and trainers were asked what they thought were the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. Overall there was a feeling that the course empowered and uplifted youth. Developing youth leaders was also seen as one of the strengths of the course. The course allowed interns to be self-sufficient, to know where to get information and how to apply this information.

“Developing youth leaders. Provides skills, information and tools to be self-sufficient and to know where to get information and how to apply this information.” (Current course intern)

*“The main strength of the course is to develop and empower youth.”
(Current course intern)*

The project co-ordinator felt that the course provided youth with the confidence to raise issues within their organisations. In addition human resources within organisations has increased as well.

Design of the course

Current interns saw the design of the programme as a major strength of the programme. These interns felt that the modules were compiled in a way that made it easy to use as a resource. This helped during the training as well as after the training. One intern said

“The course content is well designed and one can use that as a resource. The modules have been compiled in a file, which serves as a resource file. When conducting workshops I always refer to the files.” (Course intern)

Both past and current interns felt that the course was well organised and dealt with relevant topics. One of the current interns said that one of the strengths of the programme was “*what they do and the way they do it*”.

Interns, trainers and supervisors complemented the manner in which the course was presented. There was a feeling that the facilitators were well prepared and skilful. Particular reference was made to the fact that the course did not have a top down approach to teaching and that learning was not a one-way process. Interns also felt that the logistics involved in organising the camps were well organised.

The structure of the programme that allowed young people to come together and then go back to practise what they have learnt was viewed as another strength of the course.

Composition of the course

There was a strong feeling from current interns, past interns, trainers and supervisors that the composition of the group was one of the main strengths of the programme. People attending the course from different areas, cultures and backgrounds provided a valuable learning experience for all involved. This type of exposure provided interns with the opportunity to understand that the problems they were confronted with, were not unique to them and that all interns faced similar problems. This type of interaction allowed people to understand their differences and be able to look beyond these differences.

Bonding and developing lasting relationships with fellow interns was seen as a major strength of this course. One of the interns in this years programme responded to this question in the following way:

“The multi-cultural atmosphere, people from different areas, cultures and backgrounds.” (Course intern)

Weakness of the programme

Comments about the weakness of the programme were divided into those relating to the behaviour of the interns and those relating specifically to the programme itself.

The comments relating to the behaviour of the current interns focused on interns not completing their assignments within the specified time allocated and not paying enough attention in the sessions.

Weaknesses relating to the programme focused on the handling of conflict within the group, the medium of instruction, length of the course and the supervision and follow up system. Past interns identified the latter two areas as a weakness of the programme as well.

Supervision and support

Issues relating to supervision were cited by both sets of interns, trainers and supervisors as one of the main weakness of the Youth Intern Programme. There was a feeling that the supervision system did not play a particularly helpful role in assisting interns with their assignments. One intern suggested that a supervisor should be:

“Someone to help- someone on call. Supervisors don’t play that role. You are left alone [except for the help from the programme co-ordinator]” (Course intern)

Another intern was unhappy about the lack of follow up after the completion of the programme. This intern felt that there was no follow up and that most of the interns are forgotten.

“There is no follow up after completion. There is no system to track the graduates. Most of them are forgotten. (Course intern)

Supervisors on the other hand felt that interns did not get the support of their organisations and that this for them was regarded as a weakness of the programme. This weakness was to some extent reiterated by trainers who viewed the placement of interns within the YMCA’s as a weakness of the programme. Depending on the local organisations some trainers felt that there were insufficient opportunities for interns to practise what they learnt on the programme. The conditions at some local YMCA’s were not conducive to the development of youth and failed to provide them with the necessary opportunities. This situation prompted some trainers to justify placing interns in organisations outside the YMCA.

Length of the course

A number of interns felt the course was too short especially in the light of the number of assignments that interns were expected to complete. Interns also complained that some sessions were hurried because of the shortage of time. One of the interns mentioned that this was particularly the case with the last session. Supervisors felt that the programme was too broad and that this resulted in a shortage of time to cover all aspects of the course adequately.

Medium of instruction

In addition a current intern complained about the use of English as the medium of instruction saying that English was not the first language of the majority of interns. This intern said he would be more comfortable to have discussions in his mother tongue.

Group dynamics

A weakness that was mentioned by two current interns that raises some concern was that conflict within the group was not managed well by the organisers of the programme. There was a feeling that not enough was done to deal with the issue of an intern not attending regularly. This caused conflict between the particular intern and the rest of the group. One of the interns had the following to say:

“One intern was not attending and nobody wanted to say anything. This caused conflict between him and the group, felt the facilitator should have done something.” (Course intern)

Theory and practise

There were some concerns raised by both groups of interns about the issue of theory and practice. An intern from this year’s group felt that there was a disjuncture between theory and practice saying that interns were taught one thing but the opposite was done. This intern quoted the example of how the programme teaches interns to deal with conflict but when actually faced with a conflict situation interns did not know how to deal with the problem.

One of the past interns felt that the content of the course was too theoretical and in some instances difficult to implement, particular reference was made to the experiential learning cycle.

Role of interns within their organisations

All the interns that were interviewed said that the programme had a positive impact on the role they played within their organisations. Overall the intern’s role within their organisations improved mainly due to the skills and the confidence they gained as a result of attending the Youth Worker Intern Programme. Current interns had the following to say about the programme:

“It has given me more insight and more information. I am more outspoken and have become more comfortable, it has also helped me gain confidence.” (Current course intern)

“I am able to plan properly activities to be undertaken. I am able to co-ordinate a team of youth at my YMCA. I have assisted our local organisation in developing its vision and mission statement. I conducted workshops on performing arts in the local community.” (Current course intern)

“Has improved my role within my organisation tremendously. That’s how the project [I am currently working on] started. After the first intern training block the project started. Learnt how to run workshops, deal with people and organisations. It helped a lot.” (Current course intern)

From the responses given by interns the Youth Worker Intern Programme in addition to providing valuable skills, also seemed to have made a big impact on interns at a personal level. This also had a positive impact on their organisations since a number of interns have started new projects and doing work which they previously did not think they were able to do, largely because they have gained a notable amount of confidence.

Integration of the Youth Worker Intern Programme

Overall past as well as current interns felt that the integration of the programme within their organisations has been effective. There were some interns who claimed to have gone back to their organisations and shared some of the skills and information with their colleagues. There was also a general sense that interns were given additional responsibilities and were expected to play a more active role in the organisation. To some extent interns were encouraged to initiate new projects. However among current interns there were a few who felt they were not yet practising what they had learnt on the course. This was due firstly to their relationship with their local YMCA and secondly to the type of project they were involved in. In some instances integrating what was learnt on the programme specifically in relation to the implementation of projects was not implemented due to projects not getting off the ground in the different communities. In the case of current interns it is likely that it is too soon for these projects to have started.

Expectations of the course

The expectations of both past and current interns focused on gaining more skills. This included gaining skills in the area of facilitation, communication, counselling and networking. Another expectation mentioned by interns was to get more information about how to work as a youth worker. This would involve learning how to get information about their communities and being able to use that information to work constructively within communities.

One of the past interns said he was not sure if all his expectations were met. He felt that there were some areas that were not covered in detail and that he required more information on these areas. The areas he was referring to included fundraising, advocacy and lobbying.

One of the current interns mentioned that after completing the course he expected to become more marketable and get a job. He also expected to receive a certificate of competence once he completed the course. The expectation of getting a job after completing the programme was expressed by past interns as well. All current interns said that their expectations were met, with some interns saying that the programme surpassed their expectations.

Length of the training course

There seemed to be different opinions about the length of the course. Some interns expressed satisfaction with the length of the course saying that there was sufficient time allocated to complete all the sessions. There were however a number of interns who felt the course was too short. Some of these interns felt the course should have been extended by at least a week per module while there were other interns who felt that the

course should be conducted over a period of two to three years. Interns who complained about the length of the course said the sessions were too short and it was impossible to give each topic sufficient attention given the current time limit. In addition these interns felt the current time limit did not allow adequate time to complete assignments. However no mention was made of which modules should be extended. Both past and current interns expressed similar sentiments.

Additional training areas

Not many current interns could suggest other areas a training course like this should offer. However there was a suggestion that project management be included in the course. Although counselling was dealt with on the course, one of this years interns felt that this area should be dealt with in more detail. This same intern felt that including more on the history of the YMCA would improve the course. There was also a suggestion by current interns that issues relating to the Basic Income Grant (BIG) as well as HIV/AIDS be included in future programme.

Past interns suggested that future courses should include issues such as diversity, sexual harassment, motivation as well as forming relationships. There was also a suggestion that special attention be given to issues dealing specifically with rural areas. There was a feeling that not enough exposure was given to these areas and furthermore greater effort should be made to include participants from rural areas on the course.

Facilitation of the programme

All the course interns expressed satisfaction with the way the course was presented. A number of interns were impressed with the input of the facilitators, their commitment and the fact that they were well prepared for their sessions. Interns also made positive comments on facilitators ensuring that the sessions were interesting and engaging and that interns were constantly engaged in discussions. Positive comments were also made on the flexible approach adopted by the facilitators. A number of intern's felt that having different facilitators worked well on this programme.

Support

We asked both groups of interns a number of questions around support. These included finding out what type of support interns received from their supervisors and colleagues, what type of support they would like to have and if they have any suggestions to make the support more effective.

Most of the current interns felt that the support they received from their supervisors and in some instances from their colleagues was useful. Many felt that the supervisors were always supportive and tired to help when they experienced any problems. Some interns mentioned that their supervisors were helpful in integrating what they had learnt on the

programme and provided them with the necessary support to implement their own projects.

There were however interns who felt that they did not receive adequate support from their supervisors with one of the interns saying that the “supervisor was just not much help”. Another intern blamed the structure of the organisation for the lack of support. However once these problems were sorted out the issues relating to support were sorted out.

Some of the past interns expressed dissatisfaction with the supervision they received, saying that it was not very useful and in some instances felt that there was no support. They expressed concern that there was a lack of understanding about the Youth Worker Intern Programme at the local level and that this impacted negatively on the type and extent of supervision they received.

Supervisors were asked a number of questions regarding their role as supervisors. Most of the supervisors saw their role as providing assistance and guidance to interns. There was also some mentoring involved and this involved helping interns deal with problems related to both their work and issues affecting their personal lives. On a more technical level the supervision involved completing reports and keeping in touch with the project co-ordinator.

It seems as though for most supervisors their roles and their responsibilities were decided by the project co-ordinator. Some supervisors attended a workshop that covered issues relating to what their roles and responsibilities were in relation to the interns. Some interns said they were not too clear about their role as supervisors and in some instances there was some dissatisfaction expressed about the manner in which they carried out this role. There was a suggestion that the supervisor’s role is more clearly defined and that some training is conducted to prepare supervisors for this role. In addition some supervisors expressed concern about their role as supervisors, saying that they often did not have enough time to do a good job of supervision since they were expected to continue with a number of the other tasks they were involved in.

When we asked supervisors if they had contact with the project co-ordinator all the supervisors claimed they had. However there was a suggestion by some supervisors that this contact be more formalised and regular. There was a feeling that it would be useful to get some sort of feedback from the co-ordinator about the progress of the intern. They felt that since the co-ordinator gets an overall sense of the interns progress throughout the training, the co-ordinator would be in the position to provide the supervisor with this information.

According to the project co-ordinator supervision is problematic and is often not available for interns. Supervisors are also struggling to understand their role even

though a workshop was conducted for them to explain what was expected of them. However according to the project co-ordinator it is likely that the person who attended the workshop was not necessarily the supervisor and this resulted in the supervisor having no training prior to the course.

Preferred type of support

When we asked interns what type of support they would like to have the responses we got ranged from interns requesting specific support for their projects to expecting support relating to issues of a more personal nature. Some current interns felt that they would like to maintain their relationship with the YMCA and would like to be able to work within its structures. There was a strong feeling that the programme provided them with the skills and now they needed an opportunity to use these skills. This sentiment was closely linked to some current interns desire to become professional youth workers and they looked to the YMCA to provide the guidance for achieving this goal. In addition to this type of guidance there was also a request that the YMCA provides the necessary financial support that will help interns become professional youth workers. This request was linked to interns wanting to continue this area of study at a tertiary institution.

On the personal side current interns felt they would like to be motivated to continue working in this field and to provide the opportunities for interns to apply what they learnt on the programme.

Past interns felt that they would like ongoing support and training at their workplace, which could take the form of a mentorship. They requested that an advanced course be considered to allow them to continue receiving some training. There was also a strong call for accreditation.

In terms of suggestions to make the supervision of interns more effective one of the current interns felt that all supervisors attend a Youth Worker Intern programme. However according to the way the programme is structured a supervisor is a past intern. This means that the supervisor would have attended the programme. This is often not the case as supervisors are changed within local organizations and often a supervisor is not a past intern. Other suggestions focused primarily on supervisors making themselves more available and setting aside enough time for interns.

Supervisors came up with a number of suggestions with regard to supervision. Most of these suggestions related to their role as supervisors. There was a feeling that some supervisory training was necessary, the supervisory system should be more professionalised, ensuring regular meetings, a proper feedback system and so on. In addition there was a request that to put in place a system of supervising the supervisors. A number of supervisors felt that supervisors should be remunerated for their input.

This it was felt would formalise the system ensuring that role of supervision is taken seriously.

When we asked supervisors if they thought there ought to be a supervisory system we found that most of them answered in the positive. However there was a strong suggestion that this system be regulated and that supervisors have a detailed job description. It has to be a system that is enabling and that continues and eventually changes into a mentoring role after intern has completed the training programme.

Trainers felt that supervisors lacked the necessary background to adequately perform supervision tasks. There was a suggestion that the supervision system be more structured and that supervisors have to play a more active role in the supervision of interns. In spite of the general unhappiness with the current supervision system there was recognition of the importance of supervision.

Was the course a worthwhile intervention?

Among current interns there was an overwhelming feeling that the programme was a worthwhile intervention. There was a general feeling that the course not only provided interns with technical skills but also enriched them on a personal level. In addition a number of current interns felt that the course was worthwhile since communities will also benefit from the intervention. Their perception of what the programme would do seemed to be reinforced by the experiences of past interns.

Past interns felt the course was a worthwhile intervention with most of them saying that they acquired skills that they would use for a long time. They also felt that the Youth Worker Intern Programme has had a long-term impact on their lives. It has motivated them to want to continue working with youth in communities and to strive for the development of youth. The positive impact the programme had on individuals on a personal level is also regarded as a long-term benefit. For some this included developing a deeper spirituality and a process of self-evaluation.

All the interns that were interviewed felt that the Youth Intern Programme will raise the standard of youth work in South Africa. This type of course will encourage youth to get involved in their communities. It also has the potential to change negative perceptions of youth with one intern reporting that:

“Most people view the youth differently. Some people regard them as radicals, criminal and too modern. The course managed to put all these allegations within perspective. We got out of the workshop confident as good citizens and future leaders of the country.” (Current course intern)

There was also a comment that this course will give more recognition and greater prominence to youth work. It will also raise the standard of youth work since not much

is known about the contribution of youth work in South Africa. There was a suggestion that a course like this be conducted for youth living in rural areas.

Almost all the supervisors felt the Youth Worker Intern programme was a worthwhile intervention. These supervisors felt the growth of the individual attending the programme, the benefit to the organisation that they return to are some examples of how this programme can be viewed as a worthwhile intervention. One supervisor however gave a very tentative response to this question, answering both yes and no to this question. This supervisor felt that the programme could have been better and that in essence the programme did not change youth practices on the ground.

Although there were indications from supervisors that the course would raise the standard of youth work in the country, the lack of accreditation was seen as an obstacle to this. A course like this if accredited would raise the standard of youth work in the country.

Another supervisor felt that since this course was developmental, practical and applicable the standard of youth work would improve. The fact that the course focused on different content areas and brought in interns from different geographical areas would also contribute to the raising of youth work in the country. There was also a feeling that the course gave youth work more focus and in this way force people to look at it as a profession. This could mean that the implementation of youth work will be better and the output greater. Trainers felt that the course sensitised people to the idea of youth work and had the effect of professionalising youth work. They also felt that accrediting the programme would further facilitate this.

Specific course content areas

Community work

We asked current interns if the course provided them with an opportunity to gain experience in youth and community work and whether this was useful. All these interns agreed that this was the case. There was overwhelming consensus that the opportunity to gain experience in youth and community work was extremely valuable. It allowed interns to gain some practical insight into community work and allowed them to implement what they had learnt. In some instances it made interns aware of what was happening in their communities. One intern said this exercise was a valuable lesson in translating ideas into plans.

Organisation skills

The organisation skills that interns learnt on the programme were used in a number of ways according to the interns. This included helping to improve the structure of their own organisations in the case of the YMCA as well as other organisations that the

interns were involved in. Interns mentioned that they have become more confident to speak at meetings especially if there was a problem that needed solving.

Communication skills

There was recognition by most interns of the importance of communication skills on both a personal and organisational level. Sound communication skills were viewed as being able to deal with others in verbal and non-verbal ways. For some interns communication skills that they learnt on the programme improved their ability to write better, to listen and to analyse what was written or said more effectively. Interns felt that sound communication skills were particularly helpful when negotiating and in resolving conflict. Improvement in this area has also helped a number of interns to be more confident.

Problem solving

We asked interns what if any, new approaches to problem solving did they learn on the programme. Although most of the interns felt they learnt something new there were a few interns who felt they did not gain much from the programme in relations to problem solving. Some of these interns said they learnt about problem solving at other courses while another intern said she did not gain much from this section of the course because she was not able to relate what she learnt to other people.

The rest of the intern's responses to this question were generally positive indicating some understanding of how to solve problems. A number of interns realised that in order to solve a problem it is important to have an open mind and to consider all options that are available. They further felt that it was important to approach a problem in a calm manner and be up front about what the problem is. Problem solving often meant not providing solutions but facilitating a process that will allow people to reach their own conclusions about the solution to the problem.

Facilitation skills

All interns said they thought the course helped their facilitation skills. The fact that the course allowed interns to practise and reflect on the feedback that they were given with regards to their facilitation proved to be useful to some interns. Interns also felt that they become aware of the need to listen very carefully to what people say and to be well prepared before doing any facilitation. Many interns said that they have developed more confidence in their facilitation skills since having attended the course.

Book reviews/community profile/need analysis

Interns generally enjoyed the book review and were satisfied with what they accomplished. A number of interns attempted to get copies of the other works by the same author.

Community profile/needs analysis

When we asked about the community profile most interns said they found gathering of information the most difficult aspect of doing this task. There was a complaint that very basic information often did not exist and there was reluctance by some community members to provide information. When asked to assess how well they accomplished this task a number of interns were not completely satisfied with how well they completed this task.

A number of interns said that the most frustrating aspect of the conducting a needs analysis was the inability on their side to do something to meet the needs identified by the community. Often these needs were very basic and not being able to fulfil these needs was unsatisfying.

Counselling

Some of the intern's responses seemed to indicate that a number of them were not entirely satisfied with this session. Some of these interns felt that the session dealing with counselling did not go into much detail. However since the programme seeks to introduce basic counselling it is unlikely that the subject will be covered in much detail and that the input should rather be seen as an introduction to counselling.

The interns that expressed satisfaction with the input on counselling were generally satisfied and the responses that they gave seem to indicate that they have learnt something about counselling.

Comments about the course

Most of the interns expressed positive comments about the course. However there were a number of suggestions to improve the course. This included conducting the course in Afrikaans to make it more accessible. There was a suggestion that more research skills be included, as this would better equip interns to conduct a need analysis. This suggestion is particularly valid given that most interns found the collection of information one of the most difficult assignments they had to complete.

One of the interns felt it was necessary to evaluate the need for supervisors. This comment is understandable given the uneven relationship interns have had with their supervisors and is probably reflective of the relationship some interns have with their supervisor.

There was a suggestion that even though the YMCA is a Christian organisation it should consider allow interns of other faiths onto the programme. The YMCA should seriously consider making the course more inclusive and broader.

Past interns commended the course saying it was a good course and they proposed that future courses include issues relating to the empowerment of women. There was a suggestion that the programme be expanded to other countries, as this would benefit the youth in those countries. In addition there was a suggestion that the course be accredited.

Supervisors generally felt that the Youth Intern Programme was a benefit to their organisations. Some clearly felt the programme benefited their organisations by increasing the number of trained people that are available within their organisations. There was also a greater pool of skills to draw from. This has allowed projects within their organisations to improve and to grow. The problems encountered in accommodating the Youth Worker Intern Programme within local associations were centred mainly on financial constraints and the workload at the local level. One of the trainers felt that although this was a very rewarding course and had a positive impact on youth, its success depends on how effectively it is translated into programme delivery. This however is dependant on organisational structures. There was a suggestion for more women to participate in the programme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall the evaluation of the Youth Worker Intern Programme highlighted a number of positive aspects of the programme. There was a strong feeling from all the stakeholders that the programme made a positive impact on the youth that attended the course as well as the organisations to which the youth were linked. There were however a numbers of suggestions to improve the course.

Longer sessions

There was a feeling that the course was too short and in some instances attempted to cover too much. Interns also felt under pressure to complete assignments. Shortening the course or focusing on a few specific areas would probably relieve the pressure on interns and could also result in dealing with particular area in greater depth.

Medium of instruction

There was a suggestion that the course be presented in languages other than English. This suggestion could have financial implications since it would mean developing the manual and all the course notes in more than one language, have trainers who are fluent in languages other than English or if necessary have translators. The YMCA would need to make a decision about including languages other than English taking into account these considerations. However it is important to remember that fluency in English is a criterion for selection.

Supervision and support

The issues related to supervision and support were particularly problematic. A number of interns, trainers and supervisors themselves were unhappy with the type of support and supervision that they received. There was a suggestion that all supervisors go through the intern programme before they take on any supervision role.

Most of the people who were interviewed felt that it was necessary for supervisors to have some training to carry out their functions adequately. This should also provide them with some form of structure within which to work and should outline their roles and responsibilities. Supervisors were also requested to take their supervision duties seriously and to make the necessary time to do their supervisions. A number of supervisors suggested that they be remunerated for their supervision tasks.

Other suggestions

Interns suggested that manuals be handed out to them prior to the training. This will allow them to familiarise themselves with the areas that will be covered in the programme. .

There was also a suggestion to include current issues. Topics that were suggested were the Basic Income Grant (BIG) and HIV/AIDS. Courses such as this should also be conducted for youth living in rural areas.

The success of the Youth Worker Intern Programme is largely dependant on the structure and conditions within the local YMCA's. It is therefore necessary that all members of the local YMCA and especially management buy into the programme.

If one of the objectives was to get youth involved in local YMCA organisations then the main problem in trying to achieve this was the lack of resources at local level. In addition the lack of communication between the people who make decisions at the local level and the Youth Worker Intern Programme co-ordinators were also issues that prevented the objectives of the programme to be met.